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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

The World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations is a youth organization with 45 million members worldwide. YMCAs are working for social justice for all peoples in 124 countries.

1. Committed to empowering all, especially young people and the most vulnerable, the World Alliance of YMCAs is deeply concerned that half of the world's unemployed are under age 24. The YMCA is concerned about the high unemployment and underemployment rates among young people, the discrimination that young people face in securing decent work, and the degrading work conditions that millions of young people are subjected to in order to survive. The World Alliance of YMCAs is concerned about the double discrimination that young women face in securing decent work and is committed to advocating for the rights of girls and young women.

2. Through its work with young people in thousands of local communities, the YMCA sees the consequences of unemployment, underemployment and degrading employment including poverty, forced migration, ill health and loss of self-esteem. These factors affect not only young people themselves but their families, communities and whole nations. As such, YMCAs are continually searching for new and better ways to support young people into full employment and decent work, with a special focus on empowering the most marginalized.

3. For example, in East Jerusalem, the YMCA runs non-conventional vocational training for disadvantaged young people. The YMCA studies market demand for jobs, tailoring its training programmes accordingly. The YMCA believes in a comprehensive culture of vocational training which includes acquiring skills and training young people to be active members of their community, engaging them in policymaking and sharing the building of Palestinian civil society. In Viet Nam, the YMCA runs an entrepreneurial training scheme, which is recognized by the Department of Labour, focusing on young people from very poor families. The scheme is empowering young people with the skills to start their own businesses which not only generates work for the individuals, but provides income for whole families and is helping to regenerate local economies.

4. The World Alliance of YMCAs urges all member States to commit to drawing up and implementing a National Action Plan on Youth Employment. The United Nations Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network (a collaboration between the United Nations, the International Labour Organization and the World Bank) offers a model of good practice in this regard and offers support to member States when drawing up National Action Plans.

5. The World Alliance of YMCAs calls on member States to engage young people and youth organizations when drawing up National Action Plans. "Rather than viewing youth as a target group for which employment must be found, young people should be engaged as partners in devising solutions to a common problem."[1]

6. The World Alliance also reminds Governments that in 1995 they adopted an international strategy — the World Programme of Action for Youth — to address more effectively the challenges facing young people, and that one of the priority areas for action is employment. Governments agreed to promote opportunities for self-employment and to provide employment opportunities for specific groups of young people who are particularly vulnerable.

The World Alliance of YMCAs welcomes collaborative efforts between Governments, civil society and employers to develop practical strategies and tools for a lasting solution to promoting decent work for all young people everywhere.

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[1] "Joining Forces with Young People: A Practical Guide to Collaboration for Youth Employment", produced by the Youth Consultative Group of the Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network.